

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Sunset Communications Site Hazard Tree Removal
Proposed Implementation Date:	10/30/2018
Proponent:	MT DNRC Helena Unit
Location:	T16N R6W Section 35
County:	Lewis and Clark County

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The Sunset Communications Site Hazard Tree Removal consists of felling hazard trees to create a helicopter landing zone. The purpose is to increase winter access to critical infrastructure. In the winter of 2017-2018 the communications site had technical and was inaccessible for repair. This communications Infrastructure at this site is critical for 911 response in the western and norther western portions of Lewis and Clark County.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project. List number of individuals contacted, number of responses received, and newspapers in which notices were placed and for how long. Briefly summarize issues received from the public.

Zack Muse, Chief Lincoln VFD, Lewis and Clark County
MT DNRC

2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:

Examples: cost-share agreement with U.S. Forest Service, 124 Permit, 3A Authorization, Air Quality Major Open Burning Permit.

DNRC is not aware of other agencies besides the proponent with jurisdiction. DNRC is not aware of other permits needed to complete this project.

3. ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT:

Describe alternatives considered and, if applicable, provide brief description of how the alternatives were developed. List alternatives that were considered but eliminated from further analysis and why.

- A. No Action Alternative - Take no action. Leave trees in place.
- B. Action Alternative- Fell trees within the identified area, limb the trees, place boles on the ground, scatter or pile slash. Helicopter landing zone is approximately 1.5 acres being partially forested. See Type and Purpose of action for a full description of this alternative.

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:

Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to soils.

The soils in the area are described as Helmville channery loams.

Alternative A No Action - No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to soil stability and compaction are anticipated.

Alternative B Action -Some temporary soil disturbance may occur with the removal of trees and stumps. These areas will be small and rare. Minimal direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to soil stability and compaction are anticipated.

5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:

Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to water resources.

Alternative A No Action. No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to water quality, quantity and distribution are anticipated.

Alternative B Action No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to Water quality, quantity and distribution are anticipated.

6. AIR QUALITY:

What pollutants or particulate would be produced (i.e. particulate matter from road use or harvesting, slash pile burning, prescribed burning, etc)? Identify the Airshed and Impact Zone (if any) according to the Montana/Idaho Airshed Group. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to air quality.

Alternative A No Action. No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to air quality are anticipated.

Alternative B Action No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to air quality are anticipated.

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:

What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to vegetation.

The forests in the imitate area of the hazard tree removal have been impacted by a combination of western spruce budworm, Douglas-fir beetle, mountain pine beetle. Many are dying or dead. Tree species present include Douglas-fir, lodgepole pine, Engelmann spruce, 5 needle pines, and subalpine fir.

Alternative A No Action. No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to air quality are anticipated.

Alternative B Action. The landing zone is on the edge of an old harvest and grassy ridge. Approximately an acre and a half of trees would have trees removed from the area of the landing zone. Due to the small size of this project minimal direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to vegetation cover, quantity and quality are anticipated.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.

See attached list for Species of Concern.

Alternative A No Action. No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to Terrestrial, Avian and Aquatic Life and Habitats are anticipated.

Alternative B Action. The landing zone is on the edge of an old harvest and grassy ridge. Approximately an acre and a half of trees would have trees removed from the area of the landing zone. Due to the small size of this

project minimal direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to Terrestrial, Avian and Aquatic Life and Habitats are anticipated.

9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:

Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

See attached Montana Natural Heritage Species of Concern report for T16N R6W. The parcel is located in the northern congenital divide ecosystem for grizzly bears.

Alternative A No Action. No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to Unique, Endangered, Fragile or Limited Environmental Resources are anticipated.

Alternative B Action. Due to the small size of this project, the location being on an open road and adjacent to an existing communications site No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to Unique, Endangered, Fragile or Limited Environmental Resources are anticipated.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

Identify and determine direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

No Historical or Archaeological sites were found in the section during the analysis for a 2001 timber sale.

Alternative A No Action. No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to Historical and Archaeological Sites are anticipated

Alternative B Action. No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to Historical and Archaeological Sites are anticipated

11. AESTHETICS:

Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to aesthetics.

The proposed landing zone is located on the top of a ridge, with an existing communications tower, the public is cutting firewood from the area.

Alternative A No Action. No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to Aesthetics are anticipated

Alternative B Action. Due to the small size of this project, the adjacency to open road and communications sites minimal direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to aesthetics are anticipated.

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:

Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to environmental resources.

Alternative A No Action. No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts are anticipated.

Alternative B Action. No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts are anticipated.

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:

List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.

The State Forest Land Management Plan (DNRC 1996)

The Montana DNRC Forested State Trust Lands Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) (DNRC 2010)

Administrative Rules for Forest Management (ARM 36.11.401 through 471),

Alternative A No Action. No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts are anticipated.

Alternative B Action. No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts are anticipated.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.</i>• <i>Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.</i>• <i>Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.</i> |
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14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

Alternative A No Action. No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts are anticipated.

Alternative B Action. No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts are anticipated.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

Alternative A No Action. No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts are anticipated.

Alternative B Action. No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts are anticipated.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:

Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to the employment market.

Alternative A No Action. No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts are anticipated.

Alternative B Action. No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts are anticipated.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:

Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

Alternative A No Action. No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts are anticipated.

Alternative B Action. No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts are anticipated.

18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:

Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services

Alternative A No Action. No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts are anticipated.

Alternative B Action. No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts are anticipated.

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:

List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.

The State Forest Land Management Plan (DNRC 1996)

The Montana DNRC Forested State Trust Lands Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) (DNRC 2010)

Administrative Rules for Forest Management (ARM 36.11.401 through 471),

Alternative A No Action. No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts are anticipated.

Alternative B Action. No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts are anticipated.

20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:

Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

Alternative A No Action. No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts are anticipated.

Alternative B Action. No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts are anticipated.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:

Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to population and housing.

Alternative A No Action. No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts are anticipated.

Alternative B Action. No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts are anticipated.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

Alternative A No Action. No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts are anticipated.

Alternative B Action. No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts are anticipated.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

Alternative A No Action. No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts are anticipated.

Alternative B Action. No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts are anticipated.

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:

Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

Alternative A No Action. No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts are anticipated.

Alternative B Action. No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts are anticipated.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Devin Healy	Date: 10/30/2018
	Title: Helena Unit Forester	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

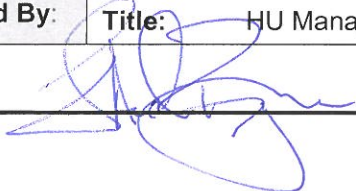
Action Alternative-Approve felling hazard trees to create a helicopter landing zone for access to the communication site on Sunset Mountain.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

This project will provide an alternative access to the site when weather or poor road conditions exist and are prohibitive. This access will enhance emergency communications for first responders in the area. The project is small in scope and no adverse indirect, direct, or cumulative impacts are expected.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

☐ EIS ☐ More Detailed EA ☒ No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Andy Burgoyne
	Title: HU Manager
Signature: 	Date: 10/31/2018

Montana Natural Heritage - SOC Report

Animal Species of Concern

Species List Last Updated 09/25/2018

9 Species of Concern

Filtered by the following criteria:

MT Status = Species of Concern

Township = 016N006W (based on mapped Species Occurrences)



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Introduction

Species of Concern

Species of Concern

9 Species

Filtered by the following criteria:

MT Status = Species of Concern

Township = 016N006W (based on mapped Species Occurrences)

MAMMALS (MAMMALIA)										4 SPECIES
MT STATUS = SPECIES OF CONCERN TOWNSHIP = 016N006W (based on mapped Species Occurrences)										
SCIENTIFIC NAME COMMON NAME TAXA SORT	FAMILY (SCIENTIFIC) FAMILY (COMMON)	GLOBAL RANK	STATE RANK	USFWS	USFS	BLM	FWP SWAP	% OF GLOBAL BREEDING RANGE IN MT	% OF MT THAT IS BREEDING RANGE	HABITAT
<i>Gulo gulo</i> Wolverine	Mustelidae Weasels	G4	S3	P	Proposed on Forests (BD, BRT, CG, FLAT, HLC, KOOT, LOLO)	SENSITIVE	SGCN3	0%	37%	Boreal Forest and Alpine Habitats
Species Occurrences verified in these Counties: Beaverhead, Broadwater, Carbon, Cascade, Deer Lodge, Flathead, Gallatin, Glacier, Granite, Jefferson, Judith Basin, Lake, Lewis and Clark, Lincoln, Madison, Meagher, Mineral, Missoula, Park, Pondera, Powell, Ravalli, Sanders, Silver Bow, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Teton, Wheatland										
<i>Lynx canadensis</i> Canada Lynx	Felidae Cats	G5	S3	LT; CH	Threatened on Forests (BD, BRT) Threatened, Critical Habitat on Forests (CG, FLAT, HLC, KOOT, LOLO)	THREATENED	SGCN3	1%	40%	Subalpine conifer forest
Species Occurrences verified in these Counties: Carbon, Flathead, Gallatin, Glacier, Granite, Lake, Lewis and Clark, Lincoln, Missoula, Park, Pondera, Powell, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Teton										
<i>Pekania pennanti</i> Fisher	Mustelidae Weasels	G5	S3		Sensitive - Known on Forests (BD, BRT, FLAT, HLC, KOOT, LOLO)	SENSITIVE	SGCN3	1%	31%	Mixed conifer forests
Species Occurrences verified in these Counties: Beaverhead, Deer Lodge, Flathead, Glacier, Granite, Lake, Lewis and Clark, Lincoln, Mineral, Missoula, Pondera, Powell, Ravalli, Sanders, Teton										
<i>Ursus arctos</i> Grizzly Bear	Ursidae Bears	G4	S2S3	PS; LT; XH; DM	Threatened on Forests (BD, CG, FLAT, HLC, KOOT, LOLO)	THREATENED	SGCN2-3	1%	22%	Conifer forest
Species Occurrences verified in these Counties: Beaverhead, Carbon, Flathead, Gallatin, Glacier, Lake, Lewis and Clark, Lincoln, Madison, Missoula, Park, Pondera, Powell, Ravalli, Sanders, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Teton										

BIRDS (AVES)										4 SPECIES
MT STATUS = SPECIES OF CONCERN TOWNSHIP = 016N006W (based on mapped Species Occurrences)										
SCIENTIFIC NAME COMMON NAME TAXA SORT	FAMILY (SCIENTIFIC) FAMILY (COMMON)	GLOBAL RANK	STATE RANK	USFWS	USFS	BLM	FWP SWAP	% OF GLOBAL BREEDING RANGE IN MT	% OF MT THAT IS BREEDING RANGE	HABITAT
<i>Certhia americana</i> Brown Creeper	Certhiidae Creeper	G5	S3	MBTA			SGCN3	4%	53%	Moist conifer forests
Species Occurrences verified in these Counties: Beaverhead, Broadwater, Carbon, Carter, Cascade, Chouteau, Deer Lodge, Fergus, Flathead, Gallatin, Glacier, Golden Valley, Granite, Jefferson, Judith Basin, Lake, Lewis and Clark, Lincoln, Madison, Meagher, Mineral, Missoula, Park, Powder River, Powell, Ravalli, Rosebud, Sanders, Silver Bow, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Teton, Wheatland										
<i>Dryocopus pileatus</i> Pileated Woodpecker	Picidae Woodpeckers	G5	S3	MBTA			SGCN3	1%	27%	Moist conifer forests
Species Occurrences verified in these Counties: Beaverhead, Broadwater, Cascade, Deer Lodge, Flathead, Gallatin, Glacier, Granite, Jefferson, Lake, Lewis and Clark, Lincoln, Madison, Meagher, Mineral, Missoula, Park, Powell, Ravalli, Sanders, Silver Bow										
<i>Haemorhous cassinii</i> Cassin's Finch	Fringillidae Finches	G5	S3	MBTA; BCC10			SGCN3	11%	62%	Drier conifer forest
Species Occurrences verified in these Counties: Beaverhead, Big Horn, Broadwater, Carbon, Cascade, Chouteau, Custer, Deer Lodge, Fergus, Flathead, Gallatin, Glacier, Golden Valley, Granite, Jefferson, Judith Basin, Lake, Lewis and Clark, Lincoln, Madison, Meagher, Mineral, Missoula, Musselshell, Park, Petroleum, Phillips, Powder River, Powell, Ravalli, Rosebud, Sanders, Silver Bow, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Teton, Wheatland, Yellowstone										
<i>Nucifraga columbiana</i> Clark's Nutcracker	Corvidae Jays / Crows / Magpies	G5	S3	MBTA			SGCN3	9%	84%	Conifer forest
Species Occurrences verified in these Counties: Beaverhead, Big Horn, Broadwater, Carbon, Carter, Cascade, Chouteau, Custer, Deer Lodge, Fergus, Flathead, Gallatin, Glacier, Golden Valley, Granite, Jefferson, Judith Basin, Lake, Lewis and Clark, Liberty, Lincoln, Madison, Meagher, Mineral, Missoula, Musselshell, Park, Petroleum, Phillips, Pondera, Powder River, Powell, Ravalli, Sanders, Silver Bow, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Teton, Toole, Wheatland, Yellowstone										

FISH (ACTINOPTERYGII)										1 SPECIES
MT STATUS = SPECIES OF CONCERN TOWNSHIP = 016N006W (based on mapped Species Occurrences)										
SCIENTIFIC NAME COMMON NAME TAXA SORT	FAMILY (SCIENTIFIC) FAMILY (COMMON)	GLOBAL RANK	STATE RANK	USFWS	USFS	BLM	FWP SWAP	% OF GLOBAL BREEDING RANGE IN MT	% OF MT THAT IS BREEDING RANGE	HABITAT
<i>Oncorhynchus clarkii lewisi</i> Westslope Cutthroat Trout	Salmonidae Trout	G4T4	S2		Sensitive - Known on Forests (BD, BRT, CG, FLAT, HLC, KOOT, LOLO)	SENSITIVE	SGCN2		34%	Mountain streams, rivers, lakes
Species Occurrences verified in these Counties: Beaverhead, Broadwater, Cascade, Chouteau, Deer Lodge, Fergus, Flathead, Gallatin, Glacier, Granite, Jefferson, Judith Basin, Lake, Lewis and Clark, Lincoln, Madison, Meagher, Mineral, Missoula, Park, Pondera, Powell, Ravalli, Sanders, Silver Bow, Teton, Wheatland										
State Rank Reason: The Westslope Cutthroat trout is currently ranked "S2" in Montana because it is at risk due to very limited and/or potentially declining population numbers, range and/or habitat, making it vulnerable to extirpation in the state.										

Potential Species of Concern

Special Status Species

Additions To Statewide List

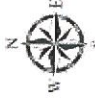
Species Removed From Statewide List

Species of Greatest Inventory Need



35

**Sunset Mtn Communication Site
Hazard Tree Removal
T16N R6W Section 35**



**Sunset Mtn Communication Site
Hazard Tree Removal
T16N R6W Section 35**

